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THE THUMB

"No caress would be complete if the thumb didn't notch it into place." Active, selecting and fixing, drifting and letting pass, gauging maturity and ripeness since the time of the Garden, the thumb constantly holds to its pivotal role in human affairs. Without it, its every use asks, would humans have been able to hold tools to invent the wheel, or hitchhike? It will not let others lose sight of its importance. Use your fingers to signal "four" and there's the thumb, butting in front, taking a bow, the self-proclaimed impressario of every gesture. Its position is that of an Old Testament prophet, stand-offish, a judge, not merely a part, of the community. Yet never is its oppositional nature more marked than when it must indicate "good job" or "all's well." With the fierce pride of Leonardo da Vinci, it draws itself up rigid, refusing to bow before even the sun. The laws of perspective right themselves at once, and mountains, cities, and the rest of the body dwindle to their vanishing points.